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REVISED: Adds new fifth paragraph with list of project partners.

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CapX2020 transmission line between Monticello and St. Cloud energized and in service
First CapX2020 project completed; improves St. Cloud-area reliability

MINNEAPOLIS – Dec. 21, 2011 – The CapX2020 Monticello-St. Cloud 345 kilovolt transmission line was energized today. The 28-mile segment between the new Quarry Substation near St. Cloud and the existing Monticello Substation is the first CapX2020 project to be completed and placed in service.

“This transmission line, completed on time and on budget, is an important piece of the regional transmission grid,” said Teresa Mogensen, vice president of transmission at Xcel Energy. “In addition to this line, the 115 kV line that serves St. Cloud ties into the new Quarry Substation, enhancing electricity service reliability and allowing for future growth and economic development in the area.”

The Monticello-St. Cloud project is double circuit capable, which allows for future capacity expansion on the existing structures. It primarily parallels Interstate 94. To reduce land impacts, single-pole steel structures predominantly were used. The poles are spaced about five per mile.

“The project ensures service reliability and provides capacity for new power generation outlets, when needed, and brings lasting benefits to the Upper Midwest,” said Will Kaul, vice president of transmission at Great River Energy. “The CapX2020 projects will further expand and enhance the regional grid, giving utilities access to the most affordable electricity in the footprint of the Midwest Independent Transmission System Operator.”

Along with Xcel Energy and Great River Energy, partners in the project energized today include Minnesota Power, Missouri River Energy Services and Otter Tail Power Co.

CapX2020 update

Construction will begin in early 2012 on the Fargo, N.D.-St. Cloud 345 kV project between Alexandria and St. Cloud. Construction is scheduled to start in April 2012 on the Brookings County-Hampton 345 kV project. Construction started on the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV project in mid-2011 and is expected to be complete in late 2012. Regulatory permits for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse, Wis., 345 kV project are pending with state and federal agencies.

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About CapX2020

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 investor-owned, cooperative and municipal utilities in Minnesota and the surrounding region to upgrade and expand the electricity transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service. The CapX2020 Group 1 projects include the three 345 kV transmission lines and the 230 kV line described above. These projects represent the largest development of new transmission in the Upper Midwest in 30 years. They are projected to cost nearly \$2 billion and cover a distance of more than 700 miles.